

Because of political gamesmanship, the House of Representatives tonight effectively terminated Department of Human Services benefits for 650,000 needy men, women and children – 23% of Mississippi's entire population. This is the second time I have asked in vain for the Legislature to reauthorize DHS. I have even urged Attorney General Jim Hood to allow me to keep the agency open by executive order as has been done before – he said no to my request.

With these events in mind, and because this agency will cease to exist at midnight tonight, I am hereby issuing an executive order to keep the Department of Human Services open and its services flowing to our most needy citizens.

I will not standby and let political squabbles tonight allow children to go hungry tomorrow. Although Attorney General Hood says he does not believe I have the authority to do this – I ask him this: What am I to do with 650,000 needy people beginning tomorrow? He can sue me if he would like – but I

hope he and others realize that we deal in human lives tonight.